

Ethics Training Approaches in Accountants'
Continuing Professional Education

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Abstract

Accountants perform a critical social function of engendering public trust in corporate reporting. As such, ethical misconduct committed by accountants tends to have a broader impact and be viewed as damaging to society as a whole. Mandated continuing ethics training by professional and industry regulators underscores the import of accountants' ethical behavior; however, there exists uncertainty as to how best to conduct ethics training so that it achieves its goal of enhancing ethical capability. Our research evaluates the effectiveness of two ethics training approaches adopted in accounting continuing professional education ethics workshops. In one set of workshops, instructors employ a traditional accounting ethics training approach, whereas in the other set, instructors incorporate an action-oriented training approach. Our results indicate participants who underwent the action-oriented training are significantly more likely to refuse to concede to the client in a questionable and pressured setting than individuals who participated in the traditional ethics training. As far as we are aware, this is the first study that compares two pedagogical approaches to ethics training in the continuing professional education setting, the primary positive mechanism the profession uses to enhance ethical action by professional accountants.

Key words: ethics training; action-oriented; accounting continuing professional education

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1. Introduction

The role of professional accountants in society extends beyond that of providing the traditional accounting, auditing, tax and management consulting services one associates with the profession. As noted by Bayou *et al.* (2011, p. 122)

Accounting is an institution, not merely an industry self-contained by its own economic interests. The accounting profession is deemed to perform an important social function by providing assurance that what powerful institutions say about themselves is true.

Mandated ethics education (hereafter, Ethics CPE) is one approach 45 state accountancy boards in the USA have implemented (National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, 2017). Ostensibly, the purpose is to recognize the need for accountants to be prepared to serve a societal role where public trust is imperative, but the content and pedagogy for ethics education is typically not specified by statutes. In practice, ethics training sessions are largely comprised of regulatory updates, Board statutes, regulatory actions and administrative rules. Absent from most Ethics CPE is formal training to prepare accounting professionals for the challenges they face to balance potentially conflicting demands to uphold their professional values while addressing client and senior management expectations. Where such training is conducted, it typically presents a normative framework for identifying and analyzing ethical dilemmas and does not go further to offer a framework for professionals to determine an appropriate course of action steps to address the ethical situations (Fisher *et al.*, 2005).

Accounting professionals report regularly facing challenges that place them in positions where their professional values are at risk. A recent survey of professional accountants reveals that pressure from client and pressure from the employing organization's leadership are among the highest sources of ethical issues for them (Neesham and Azim, 2018). These tensions exemplify day-to-day challenges, a known aspect of doing business and one that the profession continuously struggles to manage. Although the profession has adopted a strong system of ethical norms and regulations, e.g., the International Federation of Accountants (IFA) Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants and the American Institute of Public Accountants (AICPA) Code of Professional Conduct, knowledge of the standards and norms is often not sufficient to ensure ethical action (Neesham and Azim, 2018). Mandated ethics education could help to address these common situations provided that an appropriate pedagogy can be identified.

The purpose of our research is to evaluate the effectiveness of two types of curriculum for Ethics CPE, one with a classic normative agenda where steps to identify and analyze the existence of an ethical dilemma are presented. The second Ethics CPE curriculum focuses on preparing participants to develop strategies they can adopt to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. The Ethics CPE sessions are identical in format and length, each containing a mandated regulatory component and an ethics training component. The single difference is the content of the ethics training component. Treatment one employs a traditional accounting ethics approach, i.e., the use of an ethical decision-making framework that focuses on the questions that arise when considering how one ought to act whereas treatment two incorporates an action-

oriented pedagogy that includes *learn by doing* and significant practice activities involving reflection, values identification and recognition that professionals often are facing very similar dilemmas and sharing common concerns (Edward and Kirkham, 2014). The action-oriented sessions (i.e., treatment two) were developed using an established framework called Giving Voice to Values (Gentile, 2010). Giving Voice to Values advocates that reflection (Sandars, 2009), values identification (Fritz and Guthrie, 2017), and active practice (Edward and Kirkham, 2014) collectively prepare individuals to develop the tools necessary to address common workplace challenges. These three elements are prevalent in treatment two.

Using a case scenario developed from prior research (Bobeck *et al.*, 2015), participants in both Ethics CPE sessions make a decision whether to concede to client demands and then identify the methods they might choose to balance the demands of the client with their own professional values. Our results indicate participants who received the action-oriented curriculum, treatment two, are significantly more likely to refuse to concede to the client in a questionable and pressured setting than individuals who participated in treatment one. Additionally, those participants in the treatment two sessions were able to identify more viable actions to resolve the dilemma to mutually satisfy the client and retain professional integrity than those in treatment one. Although different pedagogical approaches to ethics training has been explored in accounting curriculum in academic settings (e.g., Christensen *et al.*, 2016a, Cote and Latham, 2016), we believe this is the first study that compares two pedagogical approaches to ethics training in the accounting continuing professional education setting. As such, our

results contribute to a greater understanding of what might support accounting professionals, when faced with client pressure, to successfully respond.

In the next section, we describe accounting ethics training in the profession and its associated research, followed by theoretical development and empirical support for the action-oriented approach, and conclude with our hypotheses. Our subsequent sections provide a discussion of methodology followed by a presentation of our results. We then discuss the findings, study limitations and provide future research opportunities.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Ethics Training in the Accounting Profession

The accounting profession acknowledges the critical importance of ethics instruction even before students become members of the profession. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and American Accounting Association (2012), as members of the Pathways Commission on Higher Education, recommend that accounting curriculums include content that helps students build ethical-decision making skill. Similarly, the main accrediting body of accounting programs, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International, 2013) require degree programs to incorporate skill-building in ethical reasoning.¹

Once individuals graduate and join the profession, ongoing ethics training occurs through required continuing professional education to maintain licensure and is governed by state boards of accountancy in the United States. In this setting, the profession is placing increasing emphasis on life-long ethics instruction for certified public accountants (CPAs) whereby individuals participate in a specified number of

hours related to ethics training within the license renewal period. A review of the continuing professional education (CPE) requirements by state as published by The National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) indicates that 45 states now require ethics CPE to maintain licensure, ranging from two hours every three years to eight hours every three years, with the most common being two hours a year.²

VanZante and Fritzsche (2006) note that ethics CPE is a more recent phenomenon, increasing from few jurisdictions to 39 states in a very short period of time. Beyond this designation of hours, however, there is essentially no guidance on acceptable pedagogy, although there are common themes for the content. As a representative example, Arizona describes its requirements as “(e)thics related to the practice of accounting including the Code of Professional Conduct of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; and Board statutes and administrative rules” (National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, 2017). In practice, training typically focuses on infractions of the AICPA code, Board statutes and administrative rules (e.g., acts discreditable, disciplinary actions). Fisher *et al.* (2005) describes it as “bad pedagogy” and “focused on rote delivery of professional codes of conduct” (p. 345).

Research on different types of accounting ethics instruction or training in the professional setting, in contrast to that in an academic setting, has been more limited. Bampton and Cowton (2013) provide a literature review of accounting ethics research that does include research in the professional setting. Based on findings and underscoring the current system based on the code, Board statutes and administrative rules, they suggest “the most effective way forward would be for accountants to develop the ability to think and behave ethically, without necessarily having recourse to detailed

regulations and standards” (Bampton and Cowton, 2013, p. 555). Across all business disciplines, Waples *et al.*, (2009) conduct a meta-analysis of 25 business ethics instruction or training programs and find a wider variety of approaches in an organizational setting, yet limited impact on enhancing ethical behavior or awareness with the programs.

The traditional approach used in continuing professional education typically presents a decision-making framework, or a series of prompts, employed as part of mini-case analyses (Christensen *et al.*, 2016a), where the cases involve infractions of the code and state statutes. An alternative approach which focuses on developing personalized tools to respond to values challenges is Giving Voices to Values, developed in response to interviews with MBAs who felt that they lacked the tools to effectively respond to a values challenge (Gentile, 2010). The curriculum is being adopted in universities and has been implemented in over 600 business settings such as Lockheed Martin, Walmart, General Mills, Prudential, Mayo Clinic, Kaiser Permanente and The World Bank (Cote and Latham, 2016).

The Giving Voice to Values training involves interactive exercises that help individuals strategize ways to respond to a value's challenge. The exercises include reflection, identifying and sharing one's values with others, as well as recognizing reasons and rationalizations often provided to support unethical behavior. Giving Voice to Values is a post-decision-making tool that assumes that a person has identified they are facing a values conflict and now wish to effectively respond. In addition, the exercises in Giving Voice to Values emphasize interaction with one's peers.

Christensen *et al.*'s (2016a) study indicates that it is this interaction that develops a community of understanding among participants and, in turn, supports ethical action.

Theoretical Support. The case approach, adopted in many educational settings, is grounded in constructivism, the philosophy of learning where an instructor does not merely transfer knowledge but helps students construct their own knowledge in a contextual setting (Nath, 2005). In the accounting continuing professional education context, the instructor presents a code or statutes-based case scenario and students are called upon to recognize the issue, identify who is impacted, analyze alternatives and consequences and present a decision. An action-oriented pedagogy, such as Giving Voice to Values, is also grounded in constructivism however its additional exercises and training find support for its efficacy in several research streams: reflection, values identification and performative ethics (Fritz and Guthrie, 2017; Christensen *et al.*, 2016a; Sheehan and Schmidt, 2015; Edwards and Kirkham, 2014; Sanders, 2009; Kirschenbaum, 1976).

Sanders (2009) defines reflection as “a metacognitive process that occurs before, during and after situations with the purpose of developing greater understanding of both the self and the situation so that future encounters with the situation are informed from previous encounters” (p. 685). He further opines that reflection is a “process that can be controlled and it also allows various training strategies to be developed so that reflection can be enhanced” (p. 686). Christensen *et al.* (2016a) describe initial activities in Giving Voice to Values which has individuals reflect on times in the past when they spoke up in the face of a conflict and times when they did not.

The objective of the exercise is to enhance what has worked for the individual and identify what might be standing in the way of an effective response.

Rokeach (1973) posits that values are central to an individual's cognition and, as such, can impact attitudes and actions taken. He suggests that the values an individual possesses are fairly limited in number and these values are similar across individuals though the emphasis placed by each person may be different. Fritz and Guthrie (2017, pp. 47-48) define values as "a set of chosen, strongly held beliefs that form one's philosophy and are expressed through feelings, behaviors, and decisions...(which) serve as general guides to behavior and choices" and further state "(v)alues clarification is a dynamic process in which people come to understand what they individually view as important in their lives by placing a name or label to what one values." Kirschenbaum (1976, pp. 103-104), an early pioneer of the theory, defines this process as "an approach that utilizes questions and activities designed to teach the valuing process and to help people skillfully apply ... in their lives." Values clarification is action-oriented, meaning participants actively engage in the process. Fritz and Guthrie (2017, p. 49) suggest that clarifying values "helps to guide us in our daily activities and helps to align what we say with what we do." They provide evidence of its effectiveness in leadership development curricula. Employing a value clarification exercise involving senior-level undergraduate accounting students, Sheehan and Schmidt (2015) also provide empirical evidence of the importance of values clarification as a critical first phase in an ethics curriculum. Christensen *et al.* (2016a) note that action-oriented exercises in value clarification are a key component of the Giving Voice to Values approach.

Performative ethics is described as “the ability for discourse and conversation to produce new ethical realities and, in turn, be guided by that productive process” (Edwards and Kirkham, 2014, p. 64). Edwards and Kirkham (2014) posit that the Giving Voice to Values curriculum operates within a performative space suggesting that an individual is able to more effectively respond to an ethical challenge through building communication skills and confidence. Citing the primary aspects of the Giving Voice to Values approach, e.g., “the interconnectedness of the instruction with one’s peers, the sharing of past experiences, the development of understanding one’s own and others’ values through discourse, and the emphasis on repeated voice practice in preparation for future action,” Christensen *et al.* (2016a, p. 11) propose these conversations help “to draw out beliefs and align expectations increas(ing) the potential of future ethical action.” Further, the authors provide evidence of an evolving community of understanding among peers through this *learn by doing* training that supported ethical behavior. Akin to Fritz and Guthrie (2017), Tudway and Pascal (2006, pp. 107-108) submit the various dialogs help to align “what we say with what we do.” In sum, theory provides support for the effectiveness of the additional reflection, value identification, discourse and practice, incorporated in an action-oriented curriculum such as Giving Voice to Values, building competency and confidence to act when faced with an ethical challenge.

Empirical Evidence. As noted earlier, the Giving Voice to Values curriculum has been adopted by numerous businesses (e.g., Lockheed Martin, Walmart, General Mills, Prudential, the Mayo Clinic, The Word Bank), and has been integrated in university curriculums³ (The Giving Voice to Values Curriculum, 2018). However, due to the

comparative newness of the approach, empirical studies examining its efficacy have only recently appeared in press and, as yet, are concentrated in academic settings. For example, Christensen *et al.* (2016a) evaluate the effectiveness of two types of ethics training approaches with two accounting student cohorts, one receiving traditional ethics instruction and the other receiving Giving Voices to Values instruction. Post-training, they capture student responses to an ethical challenge and find consistent unethical behavior in the traditional cohort but not in the Giving Voice to Values cohort. Cote and Latham (2016) employ a pre- and post-Giving Voice to Values training assessment of students' perceptions of how well they believe they will be able to address ethics challenges in the future. Across all constructs captured, they found significantly higher post-scores indicating students judged they had increased ethical competency and confidence following the training. Employing a similar pre- and post-training assessment with MBAs, Shaw (2013) also identified a positive significant difference in their perceived ability to respond to ethical challenges following the Giving Voice to Values training. Ingols (2011) reports the positive results of a college's experiment to integrate the Giving Voice to Values approach across its curriculum. Post-integration, they found a significant increase in the number of students who were able to link ethics and values to specific action steps to resolve an ethics conflict.

The findings in this limited number of studies are promising concerning the effectiveness of the additional components of this *learn by doing* curriculum. As noted in Christensen *et al.* (2016a, p. 8), this approach has been shown to develop voice efficacy and the confidence to respond effectively to an ethical dilemma through exercises "guiding identification of one's own and others' value, creation of a shared

space, understanding of common reasons and rationalizations used in ethical challenges, determining one's own optimal communication style, as well as scripting responses to challenges." We suggest these same components will be effective in a professional ethics training context and, further, that individuals who undergo the action-oriented training will be less likely to "give in" or concede to a client's questionable demand. As such, our first hypothesis is stated as:

H1. Participants who receive the action-oriented ethics training will be less likely to indicate concession to the client than participants who receive the traditional ethics training.

2.2 Other Variables

The current study explores the effect of two different training approaches in an ethics workshop for professional accountants and employs a scenario whereby individuals are asked to assess whether or not they would concede to a client who is pressuring them to perform in unethical manner. Prior literature investigating client concession in public accounting in such a scenario has identified two variables that we include as our second and third hypotheses.

Work Engagement Role. Bobek *et al.* (2015, p. 58) highlight the concept of "role morality" where an accountant, in various professional roles, may perceive that his or her professional obligation is satisfied by following the 'letter of the law' (the code or ruling) rather than its spirit. Underscoring that tax professionals are required to advocate for their client, Fogarty and Jones (2014) and Bobek *et al.* (2010) determine that tax professionals struggle to find the balance between a client advocacy role and supporting unethical positions. However, Shafer *et al.* (2004) also provide evidence that those in the auditor role are increasingly adopting an attitude of client advocacy at the

expense of impartiality and objectivity and, as such, are also struggling to find this balance. In a recent study, Bobek *et al.* (2015) investigate how professional role (auditor or tax professional) influences their ethical decision-making process. In their overall finding, participants who are auditors are less likely to recommend conceding to the client as well as less likely to indicate they would concede to the client than tax professionals. Thus, given the findings in most recent studies, we anticipate the different emphasis of audit and tax professional roles, independence versus advocacy, will impact ethical decision-making, as captured by willingness to indicate concession to the client in a questionable setting, and present the following hypothesis regarding work engagement role:

H2: Participants who have a greater percentage of work engagement time devoted to audit will be less likely to indicate concession to the client than participants who have a greater percentage of work engagement time devoted to tax.

Gender. Several comprehensive reviews provide insight into the role of gender in ethical decision-making (Christensen *et al.*, 2016b; Bampton and Cowton, 2013; Kish-Gephart, *et al.*, 2010; Borowski and Urgas, 1998). Two of these reviews examine moral reasoning in an accounting education context and one in a business education context. The meta-analysis of Christensen *et al.* (2016b) includes studies that investigate the moral reasoning scores of female and male accounting students. They find a significantly different effect with males scoring lower than females however they note the existence of significant heterogeneity between subjects and, as such, note other factors, beyond gender, may be influencing the results. Bampton and Cowton (2013)

cite mixed findings where some empirical studies indicate female accounting students possess higher moral reasoning than males but others find no significant difference based on gender. The meta-analysis of Borowski and Urgas (1998) investigates business students and finds females significantly related to ethical behavior. With a focus on the business arena, Kish-Gephart *et al.*'s (2010) meta-analysis also shows more ethical choices for females; however, it is not a strong effect. Bobek *et al.* (2015) found that females' professional roles (audit versus tax) did not impact their ethical decision-making, in contrast to males; hence, they are less likely to concede to the client in a questionable context, regardless of professional role. Thus, based on prior studies, we anticipate a gender effect and propose the following hypothesis:

H3. Female accounting professionals will be less likely to indicate concession to the client than male accounting professionals.

3. Research Method

3.1 Participants

Subjects are 227 participants in eight accounting ethics continuing professional education (CPE) workshops in one major metropolitan area in the western United States. All public accounting participants are from regional and local firms and are attending to satisfy their state's biennial four-hour ethics CPE credits to maintain CPA licensure.⁴ The majority of participants hold a CPA license (85%).⁵ Participants have worked in public accounting an average of 12.36 years (S.D. 11.61).

As required by this state board of accountancy and reflective of the requirements of other states, all of the workshops contain content on the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct, state ethics rules, case law and disciplinary actions involving ethics violations,

and ethical decision-making in the face of potential ethical dilemmas. In four of the workshops (hereafter, Traditional training), the ethical decision-making portion introduces a decision-making framework and employs it during case and ethics violations discussions. In the other four workshops (hereafter, Giving Voice to Value training), the ethical decision-making focus centers on the action-oriented Giving Voice to Value curriculum, including peer interaction in exercises such as reflection, value identification, identification of reasons and rationalizations and scripting responses. Of the 227 participants, 16 fail to complete the experimental task, yielding a total of 211 completed instruments, 119 in the Traditional training group and 92 in the Giving Voice to Values training group. Four instructors, two in each group, guide the workshops.⁶

Table 1 reports demographic information for the overall sample and for the two groups. The sample is evenly divided among male (n=105) and female (n=106) with a greater concentration of tax as the subject's predominant role (n=119) than audit (n=81). Age is asked in ranges to increase response rate, yielding 72% of the Traditional training group being between the age of 25 to 54 and 78% of the Giving Voice to Values training group in the same range. Approximately 35% of participants in the Traditional training group designate themselves as upper management, i.e., Leader or Senior Manager, versus 31% of participants in the Giving Voice to Values training group.

Insert Table 1 here

3.2 Experimental Task

We test our hypotheses in a face-to-face setting employing an experimental task embedded in a paper survey instrument. The workshop instructors administered the

task to participants at the conclusion of the workshop, providing 30 minutes to complete. All participants are assigned a code to ensure anonymity. The instrument includes demographic questions (Age, Gender, Years in Public Accounting, Position, Role, License), an ethical challenge scenario and questions supporting the study variables as described below. The experimental task and survey instrument was pilot-tested in a senior-level accounting class.

The ethical challenge scenario, as well as the dependent variable descriptions and measurement, is adapted from the tax condition scenario in Bobek *et al.* (2015) who based the task on Thorne (2000). These prior studies include both an audit and tax scenario as the research tested, in part, whether individuals respond differently in each of these contexts. As our intent is to evaluate the effect of exposure to different training approaches, we hold context constant and choose the tax scenario as prior findings suggest individuals are more likely to support concession to a client on a contentious issue in a tax context than audit (Bobek *et al.*, 2015). Bobek *et al.* (2015) obtained feedback and external validation from members of the profession regarding the scenario.

In the scenario, the tax partner, on an engagement of a privately held entity, faces an ethical challenge surrounding a contentious issue on which the client is holding firm. The challenge involves the valuation of undeveloped land, given as a charitable donation, that will be used as a deduction to offset a significant tax liability for the client. The tax partner believes, based on his research, the client's estimate is significantly overstated and has concerns about the objectivity of the appraiser used by the client.

The entity represents one of the firm's largest clients and the tax partner is concerned about losing the client. We include the ethical challenge scenario in Appendix A.

3.3 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, CONCEDE, represents a summation of two items, *Recommendation* and *Behavioral Intention*. Based on the scale in Bobek *et al.* (2015), *Recommendation* is measured on a seven-point scale in response to the question "Should Sam (the actor in the scenario) concede on this issue (i.e., go along with the client)?" where 1 represents "Definitely not concede" and 7 represents "Definitely concede." Similarly, *Behavioral Intention* is measured on a seven-point scale in response to the question "Imagine you faced the same situation as Sam. Would you concede this issue (i.e., go along with the client)?" where 1 represents "Definitely not concede" and 7 represents "Definitely concede" (Bobek *et al.* 2015). We determine *Recommendation* and *Behavioral Intention* are highly correlated (.916) and a factor analysis (principal component analysis) indicates the variables load on one factor (.979). The factor score and summed variable, CONCEDE, are correlated at 1.0. Hence, the dependent variable, CONCEDE, is measured as the sum of the *Recommendation* and *Behavioral Intention* scale outcomes for each participant.

3.4 Independent Variables

We capture the variable, TRAINING, to test the first hypothesis. TRAINING represents whether a participant underwent an Ethics CPE workshop in which Traditional training (0) or Giving Voice to Values training (1) is incorporated. We describe below the details of the two forms of ethics training, Traditional and Giving Voice to Values, leading up to the time of the experimental task. The description of the

Giving Voice to Values training is more extensive as the approach contains different types of action-oriented exercises, whereas the Traditional approach employs one predominant exercise type, that of the case discussion. Appendix B provides a summary of the workshops' content. As noted in the left-hand side of the table, the regulatory update portion of the workshops is the same, includes the content required by the state Board of Accountancy and represents a similar time commitment within the workshop. In summary, what differs between the workshops is the pedagogical approach related to ethics training.

Traditional training. The workshop instructor presents ethical philosophies and philosophers emphasizing an overarching theme of reaffirming virtues found in all individuals. The instructor presents an ethical decision-making framework (recognize issue, identify stakeholders, analyze alternatives and consequences and make decision). Workshop participants use the decision-making framework to analyze cases involving potential ethical violations and discuss as a group. The instructor employed cases which reflect actual events based on published disciplinary actions and encouraged peer interaction through group discussion.

Giving Voice to Values training. The workshop instructors adapt the guidance provided in Christensen *et al.* (2016a) in which the authors describe the key components of the Giving Voice to Values approach. As such, the workshop instructors incorporate brief introductory background followed by integrative exercises supporting three segments: 1) "Understanding Yourself," 2) "Understanding Others," and 3) "Preparing to Respond Effectively" (Cote and Latham, 2016).⁷ The introduction orients participants toward reasoned action by providing an overview of Giving Voice to Values

and underscoring its purpose of building a personalized toolkit to help an individual identify resources and strategies to effectively address values conflicts in the workplace. The instructors emphasize that Giving Voice to Values is a post-decision making tool that is, the individual has already determined that a conflict to his or her values exists. They then set the stage for the upcoming exercises by emphasizing the importance of peer interaction and noting a critical aspect of building the toolkit is reciprocity, the “notion of learning from others as much as from the facilitator of the training” (Gonzalez-Padron *et al.*, 2012, p. 255).

In the “Understanding Yourself” segment, the instructors utilize part of the “A Tale of Two Stories” foundational reflective exercise in which participants are asked to recall a situation in which their values were challenged, and they answered the challenge by speaking up and acting to resolve the conflict. Participants are asked to reflect individually but not share the conflict itself. As a group, workshop members then develop a list of enablers or factors that encouraged them to speak up and act.⁸

Participants complete a shared value exercise (values identification), created by the workshop instructors, in the “Knowledge of Others segment.” The exercise approach is supported by Rokeach’s (1973) belief that the values possessed by individuals are relatively few in number and are shared by most. Workshop participants are asked to write on post-it notes specific values they hold (one value per note) and to place the notes on a wall of the room. If the individual finds the same value placed by someone else, he/she puts his or her note next to the other person’s. The workshop instructors, with participant help, then group the notes into categories with the outcome being a common list that most generally agree are shared goals.⁹

In the final segment, "Preparing to Respond Effectively," workshop participants complete several exercises to help organize their response strategy, starting with an exploration of potential "push back." Workshop members then tackle an ethical dilemma case employing questions which serve to guide the individual toward determining what one should say, to whom, when and how, when faced with a values challenge.

After scripting their responses to the questions, participants form two-person teams and practice their plan of action with a structured peer coaching exercise. Peer coaching involves each individual listening and providing helpful insights to the other participant in their team. Peer coaching reflects joint problem solving where an individual's coach helps enhance his or her approach.¹⁰ The group shares what they learned from their peer coaches. The instructors conclude with a summary of key take-aways and, moving forward, emphasizing that practice and anticipating where challenges will occur serves to create confidence to act.

For hypothesis 2, we measure percentage of time in audit versus tax with the question "If you are or have worked in public accounting, approximately what percentage of your work has consisted of audit (tax)(consulting)?" (Bobek *et al.*, 2015). PERCENTAGE AUDIT reflects participants' percentage of work engagement time devoted to audit whereas PERCENTAGE TAX reflects participants' percentage of work engagement time devoted to tax. Percentages ranged from 0 to 100%, with higher percentages indicating more time spent in each area.¹¹ Finally, for hypothesis 3, gender is coded Female (0) and Male (1) from the demographics provided in the survey.

3.5 Control Variables

Early research provides evidence of a Selection-Socialization bias in accounting with position and rank in a firm having an influence on ethical reasoning (Ponemon, 1992). Ponemon (1992) concludes senior level individuals have less capacity to resolve ethical dilemmas than lower level staff accountants and suggests that the accounting profession promotes individuals with lower ethical reasoning capability. However, Scofield *et al.*, (2004) correct errors in his study design and find no difference across ranks regarding moral judgment. They conclude that it is not a factor in promotion in the public accounting profession as a whole. Abdolmohammadi and Ariall (2009) also do not find significant differences in moral reasoning ability between professional ranks of practicing accountants. Scofield *et al.*, (2004) argue their findings indicate an absence of a Selection-Socialization bias in public accounting or industry. Given the findings in more recent studies, we do not hypothesize a position or rank effect but include as control variable.

Prior research has also suggested an individuals' ethical choices are influenced by their personal ethical orientation (Bobek *et al.*, 2015; Cote *et al.*, 2013; Barnett *et al.*, 1996, 1994; Forsyth, 1985). The Ethical Position Questionnaire (Forsyth, 1980) measures ethical orientation using 20-items that capture the dimensions of idealism and relativism. Cote *et al.* (2013, p. 121) note "(r)elativists tend to judge ethically ambiguous actions based on the specific factors of the given situation and the individuals involved, whereas non-relativists believe universal moral principles should guide ethical choice." Bobek *et al.* (2015) find that individuals who are less relativistic are less likely to concede to the client. We capture participants' idealism and relativism scores using the Ethical Position Questionnaire and include relativism in the model as a control variable.

The mean relativism score for the Traditional training group is 36.45 (S.D. 10.02) and for the Giving Voice to Values training group is 35.95 (S.D. 9.125) (not significant); the average is similar to what has been reported in prior accounting studies (Bobek et al. 2015).

3.6 Action Plan Alternatives

In addition to capturing perception related to concession, we survey participants as to potential plans of action an individual might take to help address the ethical challenge and explore whether there are any differences between the two groups. These alternatives include approaches such as seeking advice internally and/or externally, seeking additional information, finding common ground, developing specific responses to issues and withdrawing from the engagement. We include these action plan items in Appendix C.

4. Results

Table 2 provides correlation coefficients for the study variables. Table 3 provides a mean comparison of the dependent variable, CONCEDE, by TRAINING (*Traditional training* versus *Giving Voice to Values training*), GENDER (*Female* versus *Male*) and PREDOMINANT ROLE (*Audit* or *Tax*). The mean of *Traditional training* is significantly greater than *Giving Voice to Values training* ($p < .01$). Participants in the *Giving Voice to Values training* are significantly less likely to indicate concession than those who participated in the *Traditional training*. This is also reflected in the correlation matrix as TRAINING has a negative correlation the dependent variable, reflecting the coding of *Giving Voice to Values training* (1). The mean of *Tax* is significantly greater than *Audit* ($p < .05$) for CONCEDE. Participants whose predominant role is *Tax* are significantly

more likely to concede than those whose predominant role is *Audit*, which is similar to prior findings. There are no significant differences between the means of the two groups on GENDER.

Insert Table 2 and 3 here

4.1 Hypotheses Testing

We employ a regression analysis to test the hypotheses using CONCEDE as the dependent variable. The dependent measure is theorized to be influenced by three independent variables, TRAINING (*Traditional training* versus *Giving Voice to Values training*), GENDER (*Female* versus *Male*), and PERCENTAGE AUDIT and PERCENTAGE TAX (Percentage of work engagement time devoted to *Audit* versus *Tax*). POSITION (*Leader, Senior Manager, Manager, Senior, Staff* or *Other*) and RELATIVISM (Score on *Relativism* items on Ethical Position Questionnaire) are included as control variables. Table 4 presents the results.

Insert Table 4, Panel A and B

As indicated in Panel A, the overall model is significant ($F=3.514$, $p=.002$). H1 hypothesizes that individuals who participated in the *Giving Voice to Values training* will be less likely to indicate conceding to the client. Panel B provides the correlation coefficients and significant effect of the various independent variables on the dependent variable. TRAINING is significant in predicting concession ($t=-2.928$, $p=.004$). The negative relationship reflects *Giving Voice to Values* participants being less likely to indicate conceding to the client. The finding supports H1.

In H2, we hypothesize participants who have a great percentage of work engagement time devoted to audit (PERCENTAGE AUDIT) will be less likely to indicate

conceding to the client than participants who have a great percentage of work engagement time devoted to tax (PERCENTAGE TAX). PERCENTAGE AUDIT is not significant; however, PERCENTAGE TAX is marginally significant ($p < .10$) for CONCEDE. The findings partially support H2. Finally, H3 posits that female participants are less likely to indicate conceding to the client. GENDER is not significant and, as such, the findings do not support H3.

Regarding control variables, POSITION (*Leader, Senior Manager, Manager, Senior, Staff or Other*) is not significant in predicting conceding to the client. However, similar to prior research, RELATIVISM is significant in predicting the dependent variable. Participants possessing lower levels of relativism are less likely to indicate conceding to the client.

4.2 Additional Analysis

Within the ethical decision-making framework, the Traditional training approach incorporates the step of “analyze alternatives and consequences” which supports workshop participants strategizing how they might act in the face of the ethical dilemma. The Giving Voice to Values approach also incorporates exercises that provide guidance in strategizing approaches to take action in a values challenge based on one’s own strengths. It strives to normalize ethical dilemmas and is built on the premise that there exist many potential plans of action to effectively address a dilemma. Practicing the approaches in a safe environment helps to build confidence in utilizing the plans that work best for oneself. Thus, whereas both training approaches ask participants to identify plans of action, given the shared values, discussions among colleagues and scripting of potential responses identified previously, we anticipate that participants in

the Giving Voice to Values Training Group will recognize the viability of multiple plans to a greater extent. Table 5, Panel A, provides a mean comparison, by group, of participants' evaluations of six potential action plans the actor in the case could consider to address the ethical dilemma. The evaluation is based on a seven-point scale where 1 indicates the statement is not at all important when developing an action plan (AP) and 7 indicates the statement is extremely important. The statements include seeking advice internally (AP1), withdrawing from the engagement (AP2), finding common ground upon which the client can be swayed to agree (AP3), seeking additional information (AP4), seeking advice externally (AP5), and developing a response for each of the reasons the actor believes the client will present to achieve the outcome he (the client) wants (AP6). Participants in the Giving Voice to Values Training group have statistically significant higher means for AP1 ($p < .05$), AP3 ($p < .01$), AP4 ($p < .05$) and AP6 ($p < .000$), as well as a higher mean for AP5 (not significant), an indication that they recognize multiple avenues to effectively address the dilemma. Interestingly, the one item where the Traditional training group has a higher mean is withdrawing from the engagement (AP2), arguably the most drastic approach (not significant). Withdrawing from the engagement may be an appropriate plan of action; however, Giving Voice to Values advocates exploring multiple approaches, taking incremental steps, such as seeking additional information and counsel, and developing one's own response based on this exploration.

Insert Table 5, Panel A and B here

Panel B presents participants' ranking of their top three action items. The percentages represent the number of participants who selected a specific action plan (e.g., AP1, AP2, etc.) as most important, second most important and third most

important divided by all participants in the group. Half of the Giving Voice to Values participants ranked as most important AP1, seeking the advice of fellow partners to determine how to resolve the issue with the client. The interactive exercises in Giving Voice to Values emphasize the importance of developing a community of understanding among peers and colleagues as key support. Participants engage in activities to not only understand themselves but also learn what they have in common with others, building trust in the relationships that can help support ethical actions. The highest ranked action plan for the Traditional training group is AP2 (34%), withdrawing from the engagement, followed by seeking the advice of fellow partners. Finally, 20% of the Giving Voice to Values Training Group ranked AP6, developing a response for each of the reasons the actor believes the client will provide to obtain what he (the client) wants, as the third most important factor, whereas the Traditional Training group indicated 9% for this factor. This finding is a potential indication of the effect of the scripting exercises incorporated in the Giving Voice to Values approach.

5. Discussion and Implications

Exploring the efficacy of two training approaches to continuing professional ethics education contributes to the advancement of innovation in ethics training (Steele *et al.*, 2016). Accountants have a fiduciary responsibility to their clients and their organization. However, above that sits the social role accountants contribute as the link to public trust in corporate reporting. Mandated continuing ethics training by professional and industry regulators underscores this critical link and the recognition that accountants' reputation is key to maintaining public trust. Mandated training can only achieve this goal, however, if it leads to improved ethical performance (Bayou *et al.*, 2011). This study approaches the assessment of training efficacy by comparing two

training approaches (traditional versus action- oriented) using a post training case to ascertain whether judgments differ by type of training and other factors. The results demonstrate that training method does impact the recommendation for action.

However, is one training method superior to the other? The task was structured to emphasize that the accountant was confident in his position on the client's charitable contribution deduction. Thus, those participants who were willing to concede to the client's larger deduction estimate can be assumed to be compromising their own professional values. Those participants receiving the Giving Voice to Values training approach were less likely to concede to the client's demands. Therefore, from this vantage point, the Giving Voice to Values approach is superior.

The key training differences between the methods are the action-oriented interventions that allow participants to actively practice responding to ethical challenges. Actions such as reflecting, identifying shared values, creating lists of potential action strategies, peer review of strategies and discovering one's own strategy that fits the situation and the individual contribute to outcomes that demonstrate the ethical capability to resist client pressures. Participants internalize that these types of pressures, whether from clients or upper management, are common occurrences and not catastrophic crises. The process of normalizing the conflict helps to reduce stress and better prepare individuals to devise a strategy for successful resolution.

In addition to training differences, those individuals who scored higher on the relativism scale were more likely to concede to the client's demands. This is one construct that was not impacted by training method. New training innovations may be necessary to highlight when a relativistic approach is productive and when it can lead

an individual toward an unfortunate decision. Those identifying their predominant role as taxation versus audit were more likely to concede to client demands. This corresponds to prior research (Bobek et al. 2015) and may speak to a cultural difference and a functional response given the advocacy focus required in the tax domain relative to the compliance focus in the audit domain.

Gender remains a controversial demographic in the research on response to ethical challenges. This study found that gender was not a statistically significant variable in the decision to address the client's demand. However, many studies find females to hold higher ethical values and be more likely to make the ethical choice. However, other findings indicate that the gender effect is not a statistically significant variable to predict ethical choice. The gender effect is an open question with some proposing that the gender effect is situational (Mischel, 1968). Christensen *et al.* (2016b) draw the conclusion from the statistical meta-analysis that observed gender effects may be the result of a confluence of indirect, and yet unidentified factors.

While the findings presented here are robust, there are potential limitations that may impede their generalizability. First, one discrete task was employed using a tax scenario. It may be that this setting was not representative of the kinds of ethical challenges typically faced by accountants. However, the scenario was based on prior research which included obtaining external validation from the profession (Bobek *et al.*, 2015). Second, the data were collected during the training sessions. While the collection methods were identical, there may have been a social desirability bias. Third, there are other types of ethical challenges, most notably, senior management pressures that accountants commonly face (Neesham and Azim, 2018). This study cannot conclude

that accountants would respond similarly to both client and management pressures.

Finally, the study was collected in one urban region and to the extent that geographical cultural differences among accountants are prevalent, the findings may differ.

The results of this study are encouraging to discover that ethics training with active learning and an action-oriented framework enhance the ethical capabilities for accountants to act according to their professional values when confronted by client demands. Future research can explore different domains where ethical challenges are prevalent and conduct longitudinal studies among training participants to assess the existence of longer term effects of training methods.

Ethical approval: We have complied with the Institutional Review Board requirements of the authors' institution regarding the use of human subjects. All subject responses are anonymous and data from the study are reported in aggregate form.

Appendix A

Ethical Challenge Scenario

Sam is the tax engagement partner on the Oxford Manufacturing tax engagement. Oxford is a *privately-owned* company and one of his firm's *largest* clients. A contentious issue has emerged during preparation of this year's tax return. During the year, the client donated a parcel of undeveloped land to a charitable organization. While the client is allowed a tax deduction equal to the fair market value of the land at the time of the donation, Sam believes the client's estimate of the fair market value of the land (based on an appraisal from a real estate appraiser that is regularly used by the client) is far too high compared to the appraised value produced by an independent appraisal specialist from Sam's accounting firm. In fact, due to the uncertainty surrounding land values in the current economic environment, Sam believes that the client's estimate for the charitable contribution deduction is overstated by a large amount.

The client is unwilling to budge on this issue. The client's CEO believes that it is merely a difference of professional opinion regarding the adequacy of the estimate. The client feels that his own appraiser has specialized knowledge of the neighboring area, which renders his estimate of the land value more reliable than the independent appraiser's value. Sam has conducted additional research and remains convinced about his conclusions. The client is not willing to disclose this position on the tax return.

The client needs this deduction in order to avoid having to pay a large tax due when filing its income tax return. While Sam has a strong desire not to lose the client, in Sam's judgment, the charitable contribution deduction is clearly overstated.

CIRCLE the most appropriate number to the following two questions.

Should Sam (the actor in the scenario) concede this issue (i.e., go along with the client) in this situation?

Definitely Should not Concede			Neither not Concede or Concede		Definitely Should Concede		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Imagine you faced the same situation as Sam, would *you* concede this issue?

Definitely Should not Concede			Neither not Concede or Concede		Definitely Should Concede		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Appendix B

Continuing Professional Ethics and Regulatory Update Workshops for CPAs in Public Practice and Industry

Regulatory Update Content	Ethics Content
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizations that impact and influence ethics of CPAs 2. Recent and forthcoming changes in ethical standards 3. State administrative rules and statutes 4. AICPA Conceptual Framework approach including discussion of threats and safeguards 5. Detailed discussion of specific AICPA Code of Professional Conduct sections, including similarities and differences from state. Includes disciplinary actions where individuals violated a particular code section. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1.100 Integrity and Objectivity b. 1.200 Independence c. 1.300's Technical Standards d. 1.400 Acts Discreditable e. 1.500 Fees and Other Remuneration f. 1.600 Advertising and Other Forms of Solicitation g. 1.700 Confidentiality h. 1.800 Form of Organization and Name 6. State licensing requirements 	Traditional Training <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presentation of ethical philosophies and philosophers. Theme of reaffirming virtues found in all of us. 2. Introduce ethical decision-making model <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Recognize issue b. Identify stakeholders c. Analyze alternatives and consequences d. Make decision 3. Ethical case analyses, incorporating potential violations. Group discussion.
	Giving Voice to Values Training <p>Introduction: Orienting toward reasoned action. A toolkit that helps you better understand yourself, how to react, and where to seek the resources needed to effectively address values conflicts in the workplace.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of self Exercise: Building on our past successes. Developing factors leading to success. 2. Knowledge of others Exercise: Shared values. 3. Preparing to respond effectively Exercise: Organizing your response strategy: Preparing to respond and preparing for push back. Exercise: Scripting your response. Exercise: Peer coaching <p>Moving Forward: Outlooks to prepare you for action</p>

Appendix C

Action Plan Alternatives

There are a number of factors Sam could consider when developing an action plan. Please evaluate each statement independent of all others and specify the degree to which you believe they are important factors to consider when assessing how to address this issue.

CIRCLE the most appropriate number that indicates your level of agreement with the following items.	Not at All Important		Moderately Important		Extremely Important	
A. Sam should seek the advice of fellow partners to determine how to resolve this with the client.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
B. If Sam feels this is a serious ethical violation, he should withdraw from the client engagement.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
C. Sam should meet with the client and find common ground upon which the client can be swayed to agree with Sam.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
D. Sam needs to find additional information that can support his position.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
E. Sam should seek the advice of outside council (individuals outside of his firm). Provide suggestions_____	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
F. Sam should develop a response for each of the reasons he believes the client will present to him to obtain the charitable deduction amount the client wants.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

G. Is there a factor that is not included on this list? Please write in here:

From the list above, identify and rank the three factors you believe are of greatest important to consider when developing an action plan to resolve this issue. Use the item letter to identify your choices.

___ Most Important ___ 2nd Most Important ___ 3rd Most Important

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Table 1
Demographic Information

Category		Traditional Training Ethics CPE Workshop n = 119		Giving Voice to Values Training Ethics CPE Workshop n = 92		Total n = 211
Age	Under 25	9	8%	8	9%	17
	25 to 34	33	28%	34	37%	67
	35 to 44	29	24%	26	28%	55
	45 to 54	24	20%	12	13%	36
	Over 55	24	20%	12	13%	36
Gender	Female	55	46%	51	55%	106
	Male	64	54%	41	45%	105
Position	Leader	29	24%	18	20%	47
	Senior Manager	13	11%	10	11%	23
	Manager	17	14%	16	17%	33
	Senior	18	15%	22	24%	40
	Staff	19	16%	18	20%	37
	Other	23	19%	8	9%	31
Predominant Role	Audit	47	43%	34	38%	81
	Tax	63	57%	55	62%	118

TRADITIONAL TRAINING versus GIVING VOICE TO VALUES TRAINING – Whether participants underwent an Ethics CPE workshop that incorporated *Traditional training* (0) or *Giving Voice to Values training* (1).

POSITION – *Leader* refers to participants who are a partner, principal or director. *Senior Manager*, *Manager*, *Senior* and *Staff* refer to participants who are at these respective levels in a public accounting firm. *Other* refers to industry participants.

PREDOMINANT ROLE - To determine n for this table comparison, we classify subjects by the amount of time spent in Audit or Tax. Individuals who designate they spend 50% or more of their work engagements in audit(tax) are classified as *Audit (Tax)*. Percentages ranged from 0 to 100% with higher percentages indicating more time spent. The number does not add up to the total n of 211 as 11 participants spent 50% or more of their work engagements in consulting.

Table 2
Correlation Coefficients

	Concede	Training	Gender	Position	Percentage Audit	Percentage Tax	Relativism
Concede	1.000	-.188**	.057	.000	-.076	.129	.197**
Training	-.157*	1.000	-.091	-.018	.020	.083	-.026
Gender	.062	-.091	1.000	-.124	.105	-.088	.045
Position	-.034	-.050	-.102	1.000	.185**	-.132	.006
Percentage Audit	-.060	.007	.132	.192**	1.000	-.801**	.009
Percentage Tax	.121	.126	-.090	-.167*	-.726**	1.000	.081
Relativism	.199**	-.014	.047	-.022	.006	.080	1.000

Table values are Spearman's Rho below the diagonal and Pearson Correlation Coefficients above the diagonal.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

CONCEDE – The sum of the following two measures: 1) Participants are asked whether the actor in the scenario should concede on the issue (i.e., go along with the client) and 2) Participants are asked to imagine they are facing the same situation as the actor and asked whether they would concede (i.e., go along with the client). For each item, responses are on a seven-point scale where 1 = Definitely not concede and 7 = Definitely should concede.

TRAINING – Whether participants underwent an Ethics CPE workshop that incorporated *Traditional training* (0) or *Giving Voice to Values training* (1).

GENDER – *Female* (0) or *Male* (1).

POSTION – The position participants hold in a public accounting firm where *Leader* (0) refers to participants who are a partner, principal or director. *Senior Manager* (1), *Manager* (2), *Senior* (3) and *Staff* (4) refer to participants who are at these respective levels in a public accounting firm. *Other* (5) refers to industry participants.

PERCENTAGE AUDIT – Participants' percentage of work engagement time devoted to *Audit*. Percentages ranged from 0 to 100% with higher percentages indicating more time spent.

PERCENTAGE TAX – Participants' percentage of work engagement time devoted to *Tax*. Percentages ranged from 0 to 100% with higher percentages indicating more time spent.

RELATIVISM – The sum of the participant's scores on the ten *Relativism* items on the Ethical Position Questionnaire (Forsyth 1980). Higher scores reflect higher levels of relativism. The scores ranged from 10 to 65.

Table 3
Mean Comparisons of Dependent Variables by Training, Gender and Role

		n	CONCEDE
Training	Traditional	119	3.05** (1.692)
	Giving Voice to Values	92	2.46** (1.333)
Gender	Female	106	2.70 (1.579)
	Male	105	2.88 (1.564)
Predominant Role	Audit	81	2.53* (1.546)
	Tax	118	2.99* (1.574)

**Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). Mean of *Traditional training* is significantly greater than *Giving Voice to Values training* for CONCEDE. Participants in the *Giving Voice to Values training* are significantly less likely to concede than those who participated in the *Traditional training*.

*Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed). Mean of *Tax* is significantly greater than *Audit* for CONCEDE. Participants whose predominant role is *Tax* are significantly more likely to concede than those whose predominant role is *Audit*.

CONCEDE – The sum of the following two measures: 1) Participants are asked whether the actor in the scenario should concede on the issue (i.e., go along with the client) and 2) Participants are asked to imagine they are facing the same situation as the actor and asked whether they would concede (i.e., go along with the client). For each item, responses are on a seven-point scale where 1 = Definitely not concede and 7 = Definitely should concede.

TRAINING – Whether participants underwent an Ethics CPE workshop that incorporated *Traditional training* (0) or *Giving Voice to Values training* (1).

GENDER – *Female* (0) or *Male* (1).

PREDOMINANT ROLE - To determine n for this table comparison, we classify subjects by the amount of time spent in Audit or Tax. Individuals who designated they spent 50% or more of their work engagements in audit(tax) are classified as *Audit* (*Tax*). Percentages ranged from 0 to 100% with higher percentages indicating more time spent. The number does not add up to the total n as 11 participants spent 50% or more of their work engagements in consulting.

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing

Panel A. Model Summary^a

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
	.306 ^a	.094	.067	1.51677	
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	48.504	6	8.084	3.514	.002 ^b
Residual	469.321	204	2.301		
Total	517.825	210			
a. Dependent Variable: Concede					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Training, Gender, Position, Percentage Audit, Percentage Tax, Relativism					

Panel B. Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.496	.535		2.797	.006
Training	-.630	.215	-.199	-2.928**	.004
Gender	.120	.213	.038	.563	.574
Position	-.011	.057	-.014	-.197	.844
Percentage Audit	.003	.004	.090	.786	.433
Percentage Tax	.008	.004	.205	1.796*	.074
Relativism	.028	.011	.172	2.546*	.012
a. Dependent Variable: Concede					

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

CONCEDE – The sum of the following two measures: 1) Participants are asked whether the actor in the scenario should concede on the issue (i.e., go along with the client) and 2) Participants are asked to imagine they are facing the same situation as the actor and asked whether they would concede (i.e., go along with the client). For each item, responses are on a seven-point scale where 1 = Definitely not concede and 7 = Definitely should concede.

TRAINING – Whether participants underwent an Ethics CPE workshop that incorporated *Traditional training* (0) or *Giving Voice to Values training* (1).

GENDER – *Female* (0) or *Male* (1).

POSITION – The position participants hold in a public accounting firm where *Leader* (0) refers to participants who are a partner, principal or director. *Senior Manager* (1), *Manager* (2), *Senior* (3) and *Staff* (4) refer to participants who are at these respective levels in a public accounting firm. *Other* (5) refers to industry participants.

PERCENTAGE AUDIT – Participants' percentage of work engagement time devoted to audit. Percentages ranged from 0 to 100% with higher percentages indicating more time spent.

PERCENTAGE TAX – Participants' percentage of work engagement time devoted to tax. Percentages ranged from 0 to 100% with higher percentages indicating more time spent.

RELATIVISM – The sum of the participant's scores on the ten *Relativism* items on the Ethical Position Questionnaire (Forsyth 1980). Higher scores reflect higher levels of relativism. The scores ranged from 10 to 65.

Table 5
Additional Analysis: Action Plans

Panel A. Mean Comparison of Traditional Training and Giving Voice to Values Training Groups

Action Plans (AP)	Mean (S.D.)	
	Traditional n = 119	Giving Voice to Values n = 92
AP1. Sam should seek the advice of fellow partners to determine how to resolve this with the client.	5.99* (.925)	6.24* (.761)
AP2. If Sam feels this is a serious ethical violation, he should withdraw from the client engagement.	6.10 (.995)	5.82 (1.342)
AP3. Sam should meet with the client and find common ground upon which the client can be swayed to agree with Sam.	5.20** (1.212)	5.72** (1.189)
AP4. Sam needs to find additional information that can support his position.	5.42* (1.416)	5.89* (1.338)
AP5. Sam should seek the advice of outside counsel (individuals outside of his firm). Provide suggestions. ^a	4.97 (1.524)	5.29 (1.537)
AP6. Sam should develop a response for each of the reasons he believes the client will present to him to obtain the charitable deduction amount the client wants	4.62*** (1.431)	5.79*** (1.064)

***Significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed).

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Action Plans: Participants are asked to evaluate each statement (1-6) as a factor the actor in the case should consider when developing an action plan to address the ethical dilemma. For each item, responses are on a seven-point scale where 1=Not at all important and 7=Extremely important.

^aParticipants indicated the following suggestions for outside counsel: third independent appraiser, legal counsel, affiliate firm or other firm specialists, and professional organizations.

Panel B. Top Three Action Plans identified by Traditional Training and Giving Voice to Values Training Groups

Action Plan	Rank					
	Most Important		2 nd Most Important		3 rd Most Important	
	Traditional	Giving Voice to Values	Traditional	Giving Voice to Values	Traditional	Giving Voice to Values
AP1	32%	50%	33%	24%	19%	12%
AP2	34%	8%	16%	23%	20%	15%
AP3	8%	14%	17%	25%	22%	15%
AP4	18%	18%	19%	12%	14%	21%
AP5	7%	8%	12%	11%	16%	17%
AP6	1%	2%	3%	5%	9%	20%

AP1-AP6 refer to the Action Plans identified in Panel A.

Rank: participants ranked the three factors they believe are of greatest important to consider when developing an action plan to resolve this issue. Percentage in each cell represents number of participants who indicated that the Action Plan should be ranked as Most Important, 2nd Most Important, or 3rd Most Important, respectively, divided by total participants in the group.

¹ The AACSB International has issued new accounting accreditation standards which go into effect over a two-year period beginning January 1, 2019. These standards continue the requirement that degree programs incorporate skill-building in ethical reasoning.

² The National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (2017) at <https://www.nasbaregistry.org/cpe-requirements>.

³ See, for example, The University of Texas-Austin (2017) at <http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/introduction-to-giving-voice-to-values>.

⁴ The workshops are approved by the state board of accountancy in the applicable state. There are no participants from larger national and international firms in the area as these firms host their own ethics CPE workshops outside of the state board offerings. A total of 31 participants are currently in industry or governmental positions; however, all but two of these participants worked in public accounting previously.

⁵ The individuals who did not indicate they have a CPA license are predominantly in the youngest age group captured and, as such, are most likely awaiting certification (untabulated).

⁶ The two instructors in the Giving Voice to Values training group team-taught. A comparison of the two Traditional training instructors across variables found no differences.

⁷ We present herein the Ethics CPE workshop approach identifying specific Giving Voice to Values exercises. The curriculum provides individuals with flexibility to design other approaches best suited to their educational setting. Individuals are encouraged to review the additional resources at <http://store.darden.virginia.edu/giving-voice-to-values> (The Giving Voice to Values Curriculum, 2018) Materials are available at no charge; however, users need to sign up through the website to gain access.

⁸ The Giving Voice to Values exercise used in "Understanding Yourself" may be found in the website resource entitled "A Tale of Two Stories." To alleviate any confidentiality concern that might exist in the professional setting, we adapt the exercise by not having participants share the conflict and by completing the first story only.

⁹ Although the workshop instructors created this exercise, it stems from the Giving Voice to Values website resources entitled "An Action Framework for Giving Voice to Values: The To-Do List" and "Starting Assumptions for Giving Voice to Values."

¹⁰ The Giving Voice to Values case and material used in this segment may be found in the website resource entitled "Reasons & Rationalizations: An Exercise" and the structured peer coaching exercise in "Guidelines for Peer Coaching."

¹¹ Some participants noted consulting as their primary activity; as such, 11 participants indicated they spent 50% or more of their time in consulting.